

**Vincent's Summer ELA Assignment**  
**For Rising 7th Graders, 2017-18**  
**Due On or Before Monday, 9/11/17**

Dear Rising 7th Graders,

Summer is around the corner. After ten months of hard work and study, we can all appreciate the opportunity for another much-needed break. That said, studies have shown that summer can also turn into a time when you forget many of the precious lessons you've learned during the previous school year. To prevent that from happening, you are asked to complete the following three-part summer homework assignment.

- For Part 1 of your summer homework assignment, you will choose and finish reading one book from a list of twenty-two fiction and nonfiction titles.
- In Part 2 of the assignment, as you read (or immediately after you've finished reading your chosen book), you will write your answers to the twenty questions provided on this handout. Your thoughtful answers will help you complete a major book review assignment in the Fall.
- Finally, in Part 3 of the assignment, you will begin your vocabulary study by learning the meaning of 15 words important to the ELA exam and in the ELA classroom.
- Extra Credit will be given to those students who finish reading a second book from the list AND also answer another set of twenty questions provided on this handout.

Although you will be required to select and read a book from the list that I've provided for you, I have intentionally cast a wide net so that everyone should be able to find something that matches his or her interest and reading level.

For every title, I've also noted the number of copies available to request through the Queens Library System. This is to encourage everyone to learn to take advantage of important, free resources that New York City offers. Remember, anyone who studies, works or lives in New York City is eligible to apply and receive a Queens Library Card! And because I've listed a functioning library card as a required supply for ELA next year, please do not hesitate to let me know if you would like or need more help in applying for a free Queens Library Card.

If you have any further questions, please email me at [vincentchen@rencharter.org](mailto:vincentchen@rencharter.org) **before July 15, 2017.**

Sincerely,  
Vincent Chen

# Summer Assignment Part 1 – Read One Book from the List

## Recommended Fiction

### 1. *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*, written by Kelly Barnhill

40+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 388 pages. Lexile Measure = 640

In a vividly created fantastical realm, a baby is left in the forest, according to an annual tradition of sacrifice. Discovered by a kind witch, who mistakenly feeds the child moonlight, the girl grows up with a potent power she must learn to control. This swiftly paced and highly imaginative title expertly weaves myriad threads into a memorable story that will easily enchant readers.

### 2. *Ghost*, written by Jason Reynolds

40+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 192 pages. Lexile Measure = 730

At school, Castle “Ghost” Crenshaw is taunted about where he lives and what he wears. He also has an anger management problem, but the kid can run, really run. Supported by a loving mother and a tough but caring track-and-field coach, Ghost learns a few lessons about life and teamwork while reminding readers of the potential in everyone. Nuanced characters facing real-life problems delivered with the author’s irresistible warmth and humor.

### 3. *Blackbird Fly*, written by Erin Entrada Kelly

15+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 296 pages. Lexile Measure = 660

Originally from the Philippines and living in Louisiana, Apple sees the personal traits that set her apart as a deep source of shame. Convinced that her first-generation immigrant mother will never understand her, the girl yearns to play the guitar in order to forge a connection to her now-deceased Beatles-loving father. Kelly has created an authentic tween voice with Apple, whose hope, determination, and passion let her soar.

### 4. *Josh Baxter Levels Up*, written by Gavin Brown

12+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 192 pages. Lexile Measure = 800

A video game–obsessed middle schooler tackles his third new school in two years. Josh Baxter has had a hard time since his father died. His mother works around the clock, and his older sister has thrown herself into school, sports, and the social scene. Josh finds refuge in the video games he and his father played together, letting his social life and grades fall by the wayside. When an abysmal progress report makes Josh’s mom lock his consoles in her closet, Josh has no choice but to grapple with his crummy middle school experience. Smartly paced and emotionally engaging, a book even those who have never held a controller will enjoy.

### 5. *Goodbye Stranger*, written by Rebecca Stead

25+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 304 pages. Lexile Measure = 560

Bridge finds herself growing apart from her best friends, Sherm writes letters to a now-absent grandfather whom he desperately misses, and, unable to face a day at school, an unnamed girl roams the streets. Displaying an intuitive understanding of the fraught period between childhood and adolescence, Stead deftly blends multiple threads and perspectives to tell a quirky and tender coming-of-age story laced with themes of gender, identity, loss, and the complexity of friendship.

### 6. *Booked*, written by Kwame Alexander

35+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 320 pages. Lexile Measure = 660

Nick Hall is a bright eighth-grader who would rather do anything other than pay attention in class. Instead he daydreams about soccer, a girl he likes, and an upcoming soccer tournament. Alexander’s highly anticipated follow-up to Newbery-winning *The Crossover* is a reflective narrative, with little of the first book’s explosive energy. What the mostly free-verse novel does have is a likable protagonist, great wordplay, solid teen and adult secondary characters, and a clear picture of the challenges young people face when self-identity clashes with parental expectations. The soccer scenes are vivid and will make readers wish for more, but the depiction of Nick as he unlocks his inner reader is smooth and believable. A satisfying, winning read.

### 7. *To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before*, written by Jenny Han

30+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 384 pages. Lexile Measure = 630

Middle sister Lara Jean Song is content to live vicariously through her older sister’s relationship with boy-next-door Josh, until her secret love letter is mysteriously mailed to him—along with every other missive she’s written to past infatuations. Juggling that catastrophe, grief at her mom’s death, and a possible new love interest, the teen struggles to stay true to heart in this light romance and family-centered story.

### 8. *Projekt 1065*, written by Alan Gratz

30+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 320 pages. Lexile Measure = 780

The son of the Irish ambassador to Germany poses as a member of the Hitler Youth in order to support the Allies during World War II. Just like his parents, 13-year-old Michael O’Shaunessey, becomes a spy in Nazi Germany, and becomes embroiled in a complex drama of espionage and betrayal. Through Michael’s narration and an accessible story and characters, Gratz sheds light on the connection between Fascism and bullying, the moral dilemmas of war, and the lesser-known, common use of children for serious tasks by the Nazi regime. A rare insider’s glimpse into the Hitler Youth: animated, well-researched, and thought-provoking.

**9. *The Wolf's Boy*, written by Susan Williams Beckhorn.**

30+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 230 pages, Lexile Measure = 570

Sometime in prehistory, a crippled boy and his wolf companion face coming-of-age challenges. Twelve-year-old Kai was not supposed to live. Born with a crippled foot, he would be a burden to his community, so his father left the infant Kai near a wolf den. Instead of killing him, though, the wolves nurture him. When Kai's mother discovers her infant is still alive, she brings him back to the family, where he grows up bullied and considered cursed. One day, Kai brings home a weak, motherless wolf pup to raise. Beckhorn skillfully explores the early beginnings of the human-wolf interaction that led to modern-day dogs in heartwarming scenarios that show the growing bond between Kai and the pup, Uff. But when Uff is threatened by the community's leader, Kai and Uff set out to try to survive on their own in the territory of the feared Ice Men. Painting her prehistoric world with now-extinct animals, pristine landscapes, and descriptions of survival techniques that will fascinate readers.

**10. *Echo*, written by Pam Munoz Ryan.**

45+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 592 pages, Lexile Measure = 680

Music, magic, and a real-life miracle meld in this genre-defying story. Lost and alone in a forbidden forest, Otto meets three mysterious sisters and suddenly finds himself entwined in a puzzling quest involving a prophecy, a promise, and a harmonica. Decades later, Friedrich in Germany, Mike in Pennsylvania, and Ivy in California each, in turn, become interwoven when the very same harmonica lands in their lives. All the children face daunting challenges: rescuing a father, protecting a brother, holding a family together. And ultimately, pulled by the invisible thread of destiny, their suspenseful solo stories converge in an orchestral crescendo. Richly imagined and masterfully crafted.

**11. *The Wild Robot*, written by Peter Brown**

45+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 288 pages, Lexile Measure = 740

A sophisticated robot is washed to shore on an island. When otters play with her protective packaging, the robot is accidentally activated. Roz, though without emotions, is intelligent and versatile. She can observe and learn in service of both her survival and her principle function: to help. Brown links these basic functions to the kind of evolution Roz undergoes as she figures out how to stay dry and intact in her wild environment. She learns to understand and eventually speak the language of the wild creatures (each species with its different "accent"). While the end to Roz's benign and wild life is startling and violent, Brown leaves Roz and her companions—and readers—with hope. Thought-provoking and charming.

**12. *Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora*, written by Pablo Cartaya.**

20+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. Lexile Measure = 750

"When you decide you're going to tell a girl you like her, you need galactic-level courage." Summer's bringing its share of changes for 13-year-old Arturo Zamora. Hanging out with friends, working part-time at his family's restaurant, La Cocina de la Isla, and joining in Sunday family dinners guarantees some fun times at the start of the hot season. But when a sleazy land developer named Wilfrido Pipo arrives in town to build an upscale high-rise right where La Cocina stands, Arturo sees that his Miami neighborhood's in trouble. The money-grubbing intruder woos neighbors and old friends with gifts and a flashy festival. Now, Arturo's family and friends must fight back to stop Pipo, and these friends include Carmen, a spirited visiting Spaniard who stirs confusing, wonderful feelings within Arturo. In this inspiring middle-grade debut, Cartaya presents a delightful portrayal of boyhood, skillfully navigating Arturo through the awkwardness, funniness, and messiness that often accompany young love. Irresistibly exquisite.

**13. *Amina's Voice*, written by Hena Khan.**

15+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. Lexile Measure = 800

A Pakistani-American girl starting middle school learns how to cope with the changes and challenges she faces at home, at school, and within her close-knit Muslim community. Amina loves to sing. But unlike the contestants on her favorite reality TV show *The Voice*, Amina shuns the spotlight. She's happy living her life as usual, hanging out with her best friend, Korean-American Soojin, playing the piano, and attending Sunday school at the Islamic Center. Except that life isn't "as usual" anymore. In fact, everything is changing, and changing fast. Soon, Amina is forced to come to terms with her identity and culture, and find strength in her own voice. Amina's middle school woes and the universal themes running through the book transcend culture, race, and religion.

**14. *The Doll's Eye*, written by Marina Cohen.**

5+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 208 pages, Lexile Measure = 680

You know what they say: be careful what you wish for.... As soon as Hadley and her family move into their new home, she feels like someone—or something—is watching her. Then comes the glass eye, and the mysterious dollhouse. When Hadley makes a series of wishes that cause her entire world to unravel, she finds herself living a perfect—but frightening—new life. A second, first-person narrative parallels Hadley's and gradually reveals the frightening history of the house and its first family, who lived there more than a century ago. An ever present and always-growing sense of dread accompanied by an atmosphere of chills and mystery make this perfect for reading in the closet under the cover of night.

**15. \*\*\*A fiction book that your 6th Grade Teachers Renay and Michael recommended to you personally\*\*\***

Ask Renay and Michael for help in locating a school copy to borrow over the summer and in identifying the book's lexile measure.

You must obtain and submit a written note from Renay and Michael before the end of the school year showing their approval of an independent reading book outside of the 22 titles listed on this handout.

## Recommended Nonfiction

### **1. *Bubonic Panic: When Plague Invaded America***, written by Gail Jarrow

15+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 197 pages, Lexile Measure = 1000

In a vividly created fantastical realm, a baby is left in the forest, according to an annual tradition of sacrifice. Discovered by a kind witch, who mistakenly feeds the child moonlight, the girl grows up with a potent power she must learn to control. This swiftly paced and highly imaginative title expertly weaves myriad threads into a memorable story that will easily enchant readers.

### **2. *Some Writer!: The Story of E.B. White***, written by Melissa Sweet

10+ copies available to request through the Queens Library System. 176 pages, Lexile Measure = 1030

A celebration of the life and work of New Yorker writer and children's-book author E.B. White. Sweet offers an affectionate tribute to White, focusing especially on his three children's classics: *Stuart Little* (1945), *Charlotte's Web* (1952), and *The Trumpet of the Swan* (1970). The whole volume works like a signature Sweet illustration, an inventive and quirky juxtaposition of parts, combining lucid text, gorgeous and intricate watercolor-and-collage illustrations, photographs, excerpts of White's writings, and ephemera that evoke farm and barn life. Like *Charlotte*, Sweet spins a terrific story. A masterful biography that will enchant young readers.

### **3. *On Two Feet and Wings***, written by Abbas Kazerooni

2 copies available through the Queens Library System. Lexile Measure = 650

Abbas and his mother are about to board a plane for Turkey when authorities order her to remain in post-Revolution Iran with his father, Karim; Abbas, at Karim's insistence, flies alone to Istanbul to stay and apply for a British visa—he is 9. Abbas doesn't speak Turkish; a promised helper fails him; the fleabag hotel he's deposited in is in a dangerous neighborhood. Here, everyone's a stranger. Abbas must learn to tell friend from foe. Abbas' anguish and fear, his repeatedly dashed hopes are wrenching. Yet whether he's crushed or elated, the story itself is uplifting. Readers are often promised unforgettable protagonists—this memoir delivers one.

### **4. *When I Was Puerto Rican: A Memoir***, written by Esmeralda Santiago

36+ copies available through the Queens Library System. Lexile Measure = 1020

In this personal and deep reflection on her childhood, the author showcases historical and emotional vignettes of a life between two countries. Young readers will get a solid coming-of-age tale of growing up bicultural and the joys and pains found through that journey. A memoir-in-verse that gently intertwines a love letter to Cuba and life, family, and memories attached to the island.

### **5. *The Octopus Scientists: Exploring the Mind of a Mollusk***, written by Sy Montgomery.

37+ Copies available through the Queens Library System. Lexile Measure = 1020

An international team of scientists with varied focuses work together on a remote South Pacific island to study octopus behaviors. Montgomery weaves a narrative full of fascinating detail, helpful comparisons, direct quotations, and personal reactions that bring readers into the experience. Chapters of action, with smoothly integrated explanatory background, are interspersed with informative passages about octopuses, the field station, and coral reefs. Science in the field at its best.

### **6. *Angel Island: Gateway to Gold Mountain***, written by Russell Freedman.

34+ copies available through the Queens Library; Lexile Measure = 1140

Newbery Medal winner Freedman explores a lesser-known period in U.S. immigration history, when the Angel Island Immigration Station, often called the Ellis Island of the West, served as the primary gateway to the Pacific Coast between 1910 and 1940. Over half a million people from more than 80 different countries were processed there, the majority of them from China. In telling the history of Chinese people in the U.S., the author doesn't hold back on the racial discrimination these immigrants faced. As immigration continues to be a major issue in America, this introduction to the Angel Island experience is overdue and, most of all, welcome.

### **7. *Treasury of Egyptian Mythology: Classic Stories of Gods, Goddesses, Monsters & Mortals***, written by Donna Jo Napoli

24+ copies available through the Queens Library System. Lexile Measure = 860

Napoli challenges readers to regard the old gods in new ways. The author provocatively explores the thesis that ancient Egyptian worship could be considered monotheistic, considering how closely intertwined the culture's gods were in origins and natures. She introduces 17 major deities and a handful of minor ones in a mix of equally lively stories and exposition, beginning with Ra's self-creation from the unchanging ("Boring, really") waters of Nun. A final chapter introduces Imhotep, architect of the first pyramid, who was born human but later deified. Sumptuous of format, magisterial of content, stimulating for heart and mind both.

### **8. *The Impossible Rescue: The True Story of An Amazing Arctic Adventure***, written by Martin Sandler.

13 copies available through the Queens Library System. Lexile Measure = 1270

Sandler brings to life an extraordinary true adventure tale set on the treacherous Arctic terrain. In September 1897, eight whaling vessels became icebound near Point Barrow, Alaska, the northernmost point in America, and 265 men faced starvation. Acting on orders from President McKinley, Capt. Francis Tuttle and his ship, the *Bear*, were sent on a rescue mission. Remarkable photographs, many taken by one of the rescuing officers, grace just about every spread, and even the captions are fascinating. Outstanding nonfiction writing that makes history come alive.